

## **Sarah Buel Presentation**

### **March 22, 2000**

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#### **I. Effective Practices of Successful Councils**

1) Effective Council's need to be interdisciplinary, racially and ethnically diverse and inclusionary. The Council must be reflective of the community it is trying to serve. If not, the product will not reflect what is truly happening in the community. The Council make up should consist of front line people as well as the policy and high profile people. Ms. Buel noted that it is common for council members to be appointed by high level officials who often times do not have a firm enough grasp on the issues.

2) If appropriate, consider rotating Co-Chairs. Although the San Diego Council has had a chair for seven years who has done a fabulous job. The number of meetings can also vary among some communities. Some Councils only meet quarterly while others meet every week to discuss cases. Ms. Buel's personal experience found that meeting monthly is very important whereas meeting on average of every four months does not seem to work.

3) The majority of the work needs to be done in committees. It is essential to draw upon the expertise and interests of community members. Community education needs to be an ongoing function of any taskforce. The majority of victims are unaware of the resources available.

4) Snacks are a good motivator to get and maintain attendance.

5) Positive media attention is essential. It can be as easy as distribution of a safety plan brochure. Public Service Announcements and press conferences also serve as vital components to gaining attention for the work of the Council.

6) Action-Oriented Agenda is based on a three pronged approach. First, honestly identify problems in a non-blaming way. Note cards are a helpful technique for people to provide true input with confidentiality. Second, identify who is responsible for reform. Next, back up your concerns with specific examples and recommendations for specific solutions. Ms. Buel noted an example in Boston where the media was a big problem. The Council there kept track of all articles pertaining to Domestic Violence and then met with the media to review where incidents were minimized by calling them "spats". This same tactic was also used with judges and law enforcement officers.

She noted that no one system is doing a perfect job and that we all need to be open to hearing how we could make things better.

7) Next Ms. Buel discussed the Community Safety Audit developed by Helen Pence Ph.D. The audit systematically assesses for how well each system is doing. Often times there can be a lot of reluctance for all key players to participate. However, when each player is open and cooperative a Community Safety Audit works extremely well and can greatly improve on collaborative efforts.

## II. Model Programs and Policies

- 1) Technology & Resources: The Largo Police Dept. Evidence Web site (#727-587-6717 x 3416). This program gives judges and/or prosecutors access to the Web site every morning to investigate evidence posted from the night before. The Web site is secured and only accessible by the judge, the prosecutor, the shelter and the advocate.
- 2) High Risk Perpetrators: Nashville Stalk the Stalker ([www.nashville.net/~police](http://www.nashville.net/~police)) - a program designed to track high risk perpetrators. Modeled after similar procedures used for organized crime and drug traffic offenders. Program is funded from the DOJ who is also looking to duplicate it in other communities.
- 3) Utilizing Volunteers : Ms. Buel is noted the importance of drawing upon the life experience of the elderly to both serve as victim advocates and to also address elder abuse. She also discussed the importance of using people who best model the audience at hand. For instance, to do an effective police training it would be essential to have a male officer as part of the training team.
- 4) Reallocate resources - to allow prosecutor and judges to fast track D.V. cases.
- 5) Womankind (#612-924-5000 )- a best practice hospital based program that has proven the benefits of intervening early on with abuse victims to cut costs and save money.
- 6) King County Juvenile Court Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Unit - (#206-296-7864). Funded through the DOJ. Ms. Buel noted that DOJ wants to replicate this program in other jurisdictions. This program focuses on treating adolescent batterers and conducts support groups for victims.
- 7) Tracking cases - arrest to disposition and follow-up. Ms. Buel noted that tracking cases is the only way to truly identify racial and ethnic bias in the justice system. She noted two communities who are beginning to take the lead in this area - San Diego and New Jersey. Ms. Buel challenged the Council to also take on this issue and become a leader in working to alleviate disproportionate sentencing for ethnic minorities.
- 8) Safety Planning - A program titled Project Options (#512-473-9415) whose mission is to provide emergency funds to victims . This project was effective with victims who wished to drop the Order of Protection. Ms. Buel noted that it helped identify when money was the primary issue when a victim wanted to return to the batterer. Also, the program helped with victim who was fired by employer for being an abuse victim.
- 9) An advocate for every victim - Ms. Buel cited a successful program in Quincy, MA where each victim is assigned an advocate. The Quincy Courts found that advocates were a key factor in victims follow through on Orders of Protection. She suggests tapping into colleges and universities to recruit students to be advocates. She believes that each law school needs to have a D.V. clinic. The law clinic at the University of Texas has to turn away people wanting to serve as an advocate.

Law clinics provide tremendous learning opportunities for the law students. Ms. Buel offered to provide all of the curriculum to start one at ASU.

- 10) High Risk Victims - providing services to high risk victims is essential especially those with substance abuse issues. Shelters often turn away substance abuse victims due to a lack of services. Ms. Buel suggested seeking substance abuse funds from the state or federal grants to maintain a substance abuse counselors on staff. Elder victims are also often excluded from services. Often the care giver is the perpetrator it is difficult for the most vulnerable of the elderly to seek help.
- 11) CEO Project - recruit corporation CEO's to adopt domestic violence programs. Each would adopted a shelter, a child abuse program etc. rather than just writing a big check.  
e.g. - Newton-Wellesley Hospital provided free medical care to all staff and guests at a shelter. They also provided financial planning assistance for fund-raising and offered use of their maintenance department to make repairs to the shelter. They also allowed employees with comp time to take shelter kids to the movies.

### **III. Impact of D.V. on the Workplace**

1. Safety risk - It is vital to have a plan for safety of victims and coworkers to include escape routes and high involvement of security personnel.
2. Potential legal liability to employers - possible legal ramifications include negligent response to threats, negligent retention and supervision, negligent failure to warn, and premises liability.
3. Increased sick leave
4. Increased medical expenses - Polaroid received a decrease in premiums from Blue Cross because they could prove cost savings through utilization of early intervention techniques.
5. Increased employee turnover
6. Bad public relations - employers should have workplace policy
7. Reduced productivity - more absence, harassing phone calls, different behavior - it is vital for all staff to recognize the signs.
8. Low staff morale

#### **Model Polaroid Workplace Policy**

1. Victims - up to 3 weeks paid leave or 1 year unpaid with the option to return to the same position.
2. 2 hours per week are provided to attend a counseling support group. They have on-site D.V. Counselor.
3. Abuser - continued employment is contingent on:
  - a. Completion of 1-year certified batterer's intervention program (MAN Alive San Francisco, Marin County - one of most effective programs).
  - b. Refrain from committing any new offense
  - c. Abide by all conditions of court orders.
4. Commitment to train 100 abuse victims per year. - welfare reform forces people into minimum wage jobs because have no job skills and are forced to go back to abuser. Request that smaller businesses train and hire even one survivor per year.
5. Written guidelines for every employee - Polaroid was sued by 4 batterers and won the case because the company was able to prove that they distributed information and trained every single employee.

